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ANIMALS IN BLACK AND WHITE

- I. THE LARGER BEASTS
- II. THE SMALLER BEASTS
- III. THE LARGER BIRDS
- IV. THE SMALLER BIRDS
- V. REPTILES
- VI. FISHES AND SEA ANIMALS

VOLUME THREE

THE LARGER BIRDS



THE PELICAN

THE LARGER BIRDS

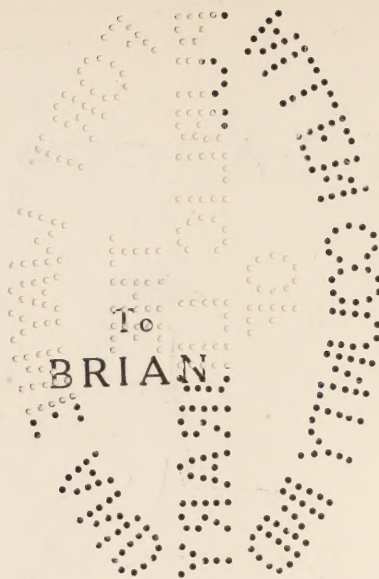


by
ERIC FITCH DAGLISH

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To
BRIAN

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INTRODUCTION

SOMETHING ABOUT BIRDS B w 400604

IF beasts are the most intelligent, birds are the most attractive of all animals. The beauty of a bird's plumage is often sufficient in itself to attract our attention, while many of the duller-coloured members of this great class have musical songs which more than make up for their homely dress. Then birds are much more often seen, and are far easier to watch, than are beasts. In most cases they may be seen throughout the day flying about in search of food, collecting materials for their nests and generally going about their daily business. Most of the beasts, on the other hand, are most active during the night and are not much seen in the open by day. Most birds have a great advantage over beasts in that they have the power of flight. This enables them to move from place to place with much greater ease and swiftness than can those creatures which do not possess wings and, because they are thus able to hunt over a much wider area of ground for their food, they can live in many places where other animals would starve. There are very few spots on the earth where some sort of birds are not to be found. They range from the hottest parts of the world to the coldest, both by sea and land. The arid

desert, the mountain slopes, the dense forests, the open plains, swamps, rivers and oceans all have their bird population. Their food, too, is very varied. A large number feed principally on seeds and fruit, but few are strict vegetarians—even such confirmed seed-eaters as the finches will readily devour insects and grubs when they can get them, and most fruit-eaters are equally ready to snap up such morsels whenever they come their way. Insects form the staple food of many of the smaller birds; while the Eagles and other large birds of prey catch and kill any animals they are strong enough to overpower. Sea birds live chiefly on fish, and nearly all of them have peculiarly shaped beaks which are especially suited to deal with this slippery prey. All birds lay eggs and, as a rule, a nest of some kind is built in which the young are reared. Some birds, like the Condor and Ostrich, make no such provision but lay their eggs on the bare ground. Others, such as the Woodpeckers, Toucans and Parrots, creep into a hole in a tree when the time for laying comes round and use this ready-made chamber as their nursery. As a rule birds which nest in holes lay white eggs, while those which build an open nest produce eggs which are coloured in various shades of blue, green or brown, with or without markings, in the form of spots and blotches, of darker colours.

E. F. D.

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THE OSTRICH

THE Ostrich is the largest of all living birds. A full-grown male stands over eight feet in height and may weigh as much as three hundred pounds. The wings are much too small to raise so large a body into the air. To make up for its inability to fly the Ostrich has very long and strong legs, with which it can run at great speed. When running the wings are often held up like sails to help the bird in its race over the ground. At full speed the Ostrich is said to be able to run a mile in two minutes. In the members of the horse tribe, which are also great runners, the toes have been reduced in number, so that instead of having five like most beasts, these animals have only one fully developed toe to each foot. Similarly, in the Ostrich we find that the foot bears only two toes, of which one is very large and the other small and nailless. In full plumage the male Ostrich is a very handsome bird. His body is covered with soft feathers of shining black, while the beautiful plumes on the wings and tail—which form the “Ostrich Feathers” worn by ladies—are pure white. The female is greyer in colour and less handsome, but she also bears fine white plumes on the wings and tail. The Ostrich lays about fifteen eggs to a clutch. These are of enormous size, each weighing about three pounds.



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THE CASSOWARY

CASSOWARIES live in Australia, New Guinea and in some of the neighbouring islands. They are large birds and, like the Ostrich to which they are related, they are unable to fly. Although not very graceful in shape, many of the Cassowaries are handsome birds with glossy blue-black plumage. The neck and head are naked and the bare skin of these parts often shows very bright colours. Many of them, too, have a curious sort of helmet on the head which varies a good deal both as regards shape and colour. One of the largest kinds is the Australian Cassowary, which stands over five feet in height. All the Cassowaries are vegetable feeders and are particularly fond of fruit. In the wild state these birds are very shy and timid, and as they live in woods and forests they are not often seen. When alarmed they set off at a rapid trot and their long and strong legs enable them to escape from most of their enemies. If caught when very young Cassowaries soon become very tame. The egg of the Cassowary is very beautiful. It is dark green in colour with a rough and granulated shell. From three to five of these are laid and the cock bird assumes complete charge of them until the young appear.



THE KIWI

THIS strange-looking bird comes from New Zealand, where it lives principally on worms. During the day time it sleeps hidden in a hole or among tall-growing reeds and other plants, but as twilight falls it steals forth and hunts the wet ground by the side of swamps and rivers for its food. In its search for worms its long beak is very useful, for it enables it to probe deep into the mud for its prey. When hunting, the Kiwi makes a queer, snuffling noise, as though trying to smell out the places where its food lies hidden. In these birds the sense of smell is very keen. Perhaps this is to make up for the fact that their eyesight is poor, for they do not appear to be able to see at all clearly either by daylight or in the dark. Besides worms, the Kiwi also eats insects of various kinds and sometimes takes a few berries. As a rule only one egg is laid which is very large in comparison with the size of the bird. The female lays her egg in a hole in the ground and leaves the cock bird to sit on it until the young one hatches. As may be seen from the picture on the opposite page, the Kiwi is a very round and dumpy-looking bird, with a long beak and very stout legs. The body is covered with brownish and grey feathers, all of which are very long and hair-like. There is no tail and the wings are so small that they are completely hidden among the feathers of the body.



THE PENGUIN

THIS is one of the strangest of birds. The wings, instead of bearing long quills, are covered with tiny feathers like scales. They are quite useless as flying organs and the Penguin is unable to raise its body so much as a foot from the ground by their aid. But although the wings are never used for the purpose of flight they are by no means useless, for the bird employs them as oars, or paddles, to drive it through the water. When the Penguin enters the water, the whole of its wings are submerged and the webbed feet at the tail-end of the body are used only as rudders. There are several different kinds of Penguins and all are found south of the equator—from the hottest to the coldest parts. Although they differ in colour and size, all bear a strong family likeness to one another and you are not at all likely to mistake a bird of this kind for anything else. Penguins feed on fish, which they catch by swimming and diving. These birds are much more at home on water than on land, for though their queer wings enable them to swim very quickly, their short legs and webbed feet cause them to waddle awkwardly when walking. Penguins live in large companies. The young ones are very helpless when first hatched and they are nursed and tended by their parents for a good deal longer than is usual with birds.



THE PELICAN

ON looking at a Pelican the first thing one notices is its huge beak. This enormous beak is not only remarkable for its size but also for a curious bag or pouch of yellow skin which is carried beneath it. The Pelican lives on fish, which it catches by using its beak as a dip net. The large pouch is sent down among a shoal of fishes and then raised with a number of the slippery prey caught in it. The upper half of the beak is then closed over the catch like a lid over a basket, and the fishes are thus carried ashore to be eaten by the bird itself or fed to its young. Pelicans live in large flocks, often numbering many thousands, and although they seem to be so clumsily built they are excellent flyers. The feet are remarkable in that all four toes are joined together by a web. In the ducks, which also have webbed feet for swimming, only the front three toes are joined in this way, the fourth, which points backward, being left free. There are several different kinds of Pelicans scattered over various parts of the world. They nest on the ground and lay two large white eggs on which the female bird sits until the young hatch out. Young Pelicans as they leave the egg, are blind and quite naked.



THE FLAMINGO

FLAMINGOS are found in several of the warmer countries of the world. They are birds of great beauty when seen in their wild state for their plumage is brilliant in shades of scarlet and deep pink. When kept in countries, where their natural food cannot be supplied, much of their beauty is missed, as their feathers become paler in colour each time the birds moult until the whole of the plumage is almost white. The Flamingo is a tall bird, standing from four to five feet in height, with very long, thin legs and neck. The beak has the appearance of having been broken and its edges form a sifter or strainer. Flamingos live on small shell-fish, water insects and similar food. In their native countries they find their food on the bottoms of rivers and lakes in which they wade with their long necks bent downwards and the tops of their beaks pressed against the mud. As the birds move along in this position the mud is churned up and sifted through their beaks, any small animals contained in it being swallowed. The Flamingo builds a large mud nest in the middle of the water of the river by which it lives. This it makes in the form of a mound with a hollow in the centre. Here the two large eggs are laid. When the Flamingo flies its long thin neck is stretched out straight in front of its body and its equally long legs behind, so that it has a very strange appearance,



THE COOT

THE Coot is found in all parts of the British Isles where slow running rivers, swamps and lakes occur. It is also common in almost all other European countries as well as in Asia and Africa. Although its feet are not webbed like those of the ducks and other water birds, the Coot spends most of its life on the water and is an excellent swimmer. The feet are large for the size of the bird and each toe is fringed with a broad wavy flap of skin. Feet of this kind enable the Coot to swim with ease and also help it in running over the soft ground by the sides of rivers and lakes by which it lives. The whole of the plumage is sooty black but for a small bar of white on the wings which is hidden except when the bird is flying. The beak is pale pinkish white and from its base a broad pure white shield rises up to cover the forehead. The food of the Coot consists of water plants, worms, water insects and shell-fish. It obtains much of its food by diving. The Coot builds a very large nest in, or very near to, the water. From six to twelve eggs are laid which are creamy white finely spotted with dark brown.



THE SWAN

WHEN seen slowly gliding over the surface of a quiet lake, the Swan is one of the most graceful of birds, but on land it loses much of its beauty, for away from the water its carriage is awkward and its short legs cause it to walk with a waddle. The Swan so often seen on lakes in parks, is the Mute Swan which is the most graceful of all the different kinds which are found in different parts of the world. In the Mute Swan, the neck, when the bird is swimming, is carried in a graceful S shaped curve and the wings are half raised over the back so that they stand up like white sails. The beak is bright orange and on the forehead there is a large, black knob. The name "Mute" Swan was given to this bird long ago when it was thought to have no voice. But this is a mistake, for the males often make a curious grunting noise and at nesting time a soft call is also uttered. The large nest of the Swan is built of water plants and reeds with a lining of down which is plucked from the breasts of the birds. The eggs are greenish white and as many as twelve are sometimes found in one nest. The young ones are at first grey in colour with black beaks and are called "Cygnets." When very young, baby swans are carried about on their parents' backs.



THE CORMORANT

CORMORANTS may be found living on the rocky coasts in all the five continents of the world. They are typically birds of the sea coast, although in some places they are known to ascend large rivers for considerable distances. Their food consists of fish, which they catch by diving. These birds are very swift swimmers and expert at diving. When alarmed on the water they sink beneath the surface until the body is entirely hidden, only a part of the long neck and head appearing above the water. In Japan and some other countries Cormorants are trained to fish for their owners. The birds are taken out in boats and sent into the water where fish are known to be. The Cormorants quickly catch the fish and return with them to the boats. The Cormorant is a handsome bird with a glossy black plumage, which shines green and purple in the sun. The throat and sides of the head are white. In the early spring a patch of white also appears on the thighs and a few thin feathers of the same colour grow out from the head and along the sides of the neck. The nest is built of seaweed and placed on a ledge of rock or on the face of a cliff. The eggs are covered with a thick layer of chalky material so that they appear to be white, but if this outer covering is rubbed off the shell beneath is seen to be pale blue. Three or four eggs are laid to a clutch.



THE PUFFIN

THIS queer looking bird is sometimes called the Sea Parrot, though its resemblance to a parrot is not very marked! The enormous beak is flattened from side to side and brilliantly coloured in shades of red, yellow and blue-grey. These bright colours are only shown during the nesting season. When this is over most of the outer covering of the bill drops off, so that in the winter the beak is much smaller and duller. In spite of its rather heavy and ungainly appearance, the Puffin is a very active bird, extremely swift on the wing and an expert swimmer and diver, swimming rapidly under water by flapping its wings. It feeds only on fish. Puffins live in very large colonies, and in places where these birds nest many thousands may often be seen together. During the greater part of the year Puffins range the open ocean, but as the time for nesting comes round they return to the land and each pair of birds takes possession of a rabbit burrow, if these are to be found, the rightful owner often sharing its home with its self-invited guests. Where no such ready-made holes are available, the Puffins dig nesting burrows for themselves. Sometimes a rough nest of seaweeds and wet grass is made, but very often the eggs are laid on the bare ground. The Puffin lays but one egg. This is white with faint specklings of grey and red.



THE CROW

THE Carrion Crow is to be met with in most parts of England and the southern parts of Scotland, but is much less common than another black bird with which it is often confused—the Rook. At first sight the Crow and the Rook are very much alike. Both are black, about the same size and may often be seen feeding together. The Crow may be distinguished from the Rook by its note, which sounds something like “varawk” whereas the Rook says “caw, caw.” Then, in the Rook the feathers at the base of the beak soon become rubbed off as the bird digs about in the ground, so that a bald patch appears just where the beak joins the head. In the Crow this part is always covered with black feathers. The food of the Crow is very varied. It is especially fond of young birds and eggs, and for this reason it is very much disliked by poultry farmers and gamekeepers. Mice, young rabbits, large beetles, worms, frogs and toads are also eaten as well as grain of various kinds. The Carrion Crow is a very bold bird and will swoop down and carry off a young chick under the very eyes of the farmer and is usually far off before anything can be done to rescue the victim. The nest is built in a tree. It is a large structure composed of sticks and twigs lined with hair and wool. The eggs are blue or green in colour spotted with brown.



THE MAGPIE

THE Magpie is a general favourite with all who know him. His handsome appearance, mischievous character and the fact that he seems naturally to have a friendly feeling towards man, all help to make him popular. Magpies are common in many parts of Great Britain and may often be seen about gardens and cultivated fields hunting for insects, worms and other food. This bird is not very particular what it eats, insects of all kinds, worms, mice, small birds and their eggs, acorns and fruit are all devoured, and in the winter it will often visit houses for scraps thrown out for smaller visitors. The nest is large and composed of sticks, twigs and roots. It is a domed structure with a small, single entrance. As a rule it is placed high up on the top-most branches of a tall tree and is very difficult to get at. From five to eight eggs are laid. These are bluish green spotted with dark brown. The Magpie makes a very amusing and intelligent pet, quickly becoming tame enough to walk about the house and garden like a dog and never attempting to fly away. It is strongly attracted by bright and glittering objects and will steal and hide rings, thimbles and coins when it finds them. The bird seems to do this from pure love of mischief, for such things are, of course, of no use to it and appear to be forgotten as soon as hidden.



THE MACAW

THE Macaws are the largest of the parrots and are among the most brightly coloured of all birds. They have their home in Central and South America where they live in flocks, and sleep and nest in the dense forests. During the early part of the day they fly in large companies to their feeding grounds, which may be in the forests in which they sleep or in more open country. Their food consists of fruit, nuts and grain. The loud, harsh scream of the Macaw must be well known to everyone who has visited the parrot house at a zoo, and a flock of these birds makes a deafening clamour. All the Macaws nest in holes in trees and, as the holes selected for this purpose are often hardly large enough to admit the bird's body, the long tail gets sadly broken and rubbed during the nesting season, so that by the time the young are old enough to leave the nest their parents present a very bedraggled appearance. The bird shown on the opposite page is the Blue and Yellow Macaw, in which the whole of the upper parts are deep blue and the breast yellow. There is a large patch of naked skin round the eye which is surrounded by a black band. The crown of the head is green. Macaws make very interesting pets and soon become very tame. They are not good at learning to talk like many of the smaller parrots, however, and never lose their unpleasant habit of screaming.



THE WOODPECKER

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WOODPECKERS, of which there are many different kinds, live on trees. Their feet are well fitted for climbing and are armed with sharp claws. The foot is quite different in shape from that of typical perching birds, for two of the toes point forward and two backwards. In many kinds, too, the tail feathers are very strong and stiff, so that they can support the weight of the bird as it clings to a tree trunk and searches for food. The beak is long and sharp and is used for hammering holes in the bark of trees to enable the bird to get at the grubs and insects hidden beneath—for it is on such food that Woodpeckers live. Having made a hole the bird inserts its long, sticky, worm-like tongue and either licks up its prey or hooks it out on the sharp barbs with which the tip of this organ is provided. All the typical Woodpeckers lay their eggs in holes in trees. No nest is built and the eggs are always white. A curious bird called the Ground Woodpecker, which lives in Africa, rarely if ever climbs trees but finds its food on the ground and lays its eggs in holes in walls and banks. The bird shown in the picture is the Spotted Woodpecker. This is a common British bird which nests in woods and forests.



THE HORNBILL

THE Hornbills are remarkable for their extraordinary beaks. These are not only very large but are usually ornamented with a huge swollen portion at the top, which is called the helmet or "casque." Of the many different kinds of Hornbills which are found in Africa, India, New Guinea and in many islands in the neighbourhood of these countries, some live on the ground and feed on small mammals, birds, lizards, snakes and large insects, but most of them are tree dwellers and feed principally on fruit. The nesting habits of the Hornbills are in many ways different from those found in any other kind of bird. When the nesting season approaches the female enters a hole in a tree and as soon as she is inside the cock bird proceeds to close up the entrance with mud. This work is continued until only a small slit is left, and through this the female pushes the tip of her beak. In this prison the hen remains until the eggs are hatched; all her food being brought to her by her mate. The cock collects fruit and berries, swallows them and brings them up again wrapped in small, purse-like bags, composed of rubber-like skin, which are produced from his own stomach! Three or four of these queer parcels of food form a meal for the imprisoned hen. The bird shown in the picture is the Black Hornbill which is found in the forests and jungles of West Africa.



THE TOUCAN

IN the Toucan we have a small bird with a very large beak. Not only is the beak very large but it is, as a rule, very highly coloured. When one sees a bird of this kind for the first time one naturally wonders how it manages to carry this huge beak about, for it looks as though it must weigh as much as the body of the bird itself. Fortunately for the Toucan, however, the beak, although so large, is very light, as it is almost hollow inside and the outer covering is very thin. Toucans live in the forests of Central and South America. They feed principally on fruit. Why they should need so large a beak is not clear, but perhaps it is useful for reaching bunches of berries and other fruit growing on twigs too thin to bear the weight of the bird. The Toucan is also peculiar in the manner in which its toes are arranged. In most birds three of the toes are in front and one behind, but in the Toucan they are in pairs, two pointing each way. When these birds go to sleep they tuck their huge bills under their wings and cock their tails up over their backs! The Toucan lays two white eggs in a hole in a hollow tree.



THE EARED PHEASANT

AMONG the Pheasants we find some of the most handsome of birds. The Common Pheasant of our woods is very beautiful but it cannot compare with some of its foreign relatives in which the blue, green and golden shades of the plumage are only equalled by the Peacocks. Most of the Pheasants are woodland birds, living in small parties and feeding on seeds and berries. One of the most beautiful is the Reeves' Pheasant which lives in Northern China and has a tail measuring five feet long. This bird may generally be seen in Zoological Gardens. The Eared Pheasants, of which there are five kinds, all come from Central and Eastern Asia. They are big birds in which all the feathers are long and soft. The face and sides of the head are naked and behind the ears the feathers form short tufts which stand out like horns behind the head. The bird shown in our picture is the Manchurian Eared Pheasant which lives in the pine forests on the mountains of Manchuria and Northern China. The shoulders, back and upper tail are pale brown or greyish white, with the chest, back of the head and neck black or very dark brown. About fifty of these Eared Pheasants usually feed and sleep together. Although not much seen in their own country, these birds are often kept in captivity and may often be found in our zoos.



THE CURASSOW

CURASSOWS are Central and South American birds. There are several different kinds and the largest are nearly as big as turkeys. They are all handsome birds, many of them having brightly coloured patches of bare skin on the face and neck and curled feathers on the head which form a short crest. The shape of the beak varies very much in these birds. In some it is like that of the common fowl, but in the Razor Billed Curassow the top half is very deep and raised into a sharp ridge. The Mexican Crested Curassow, which is shown in the picture on the opposite page, has a large, pale yellow sheath of horny flesh at the base of the beak which swells up over the nostrils into a flattened knob. Curassows build large nests either on the ground or in trees. Here they lay a number of white eggs. When first hatched the young are covered with pale brownish down showing darker spots. In the different kinds of Curassows the males are all glossy black and white, but the hens vary much in colour. Sometimes they are similar to the males in plumage, but in many species they are very much lighter, the general colour of the feathers being pale brown with bars of black, white and reddish brown.



THE LAUGHING JACKASS

THE Laughing Jackass is one of the largest of the Kingfishers. Most of the members of the kingfisher tribe are remarkable for the brilliance and beauty of their plumage, but the Laughing Jackass is an exception for, except for a few small feathers in the wing which are pale blue, the body is clothed in various shades of dark brown and dirty white. This bird gets its name from the cries which it utters at dawn, noon and as the sun goes down in the evening. At such times the Laughing Jackass makes the forests ring with its loud and discordant screams, which resemble mad laughter. Although it is called a Jackass this bird is by no means foolish. On the contrary it is very tame and friendly to man and is a general favourite in the countries where it is common. The Laughing Jackass lives in forests in Australia. Its food is very varied, for besides eating any small mammals and birds which it can catch, it also devours lizards, snakes, large insects and crabs. For its nest this bird selects a hole in a large gum-tree and here it lays its pure white eggs in August or September.



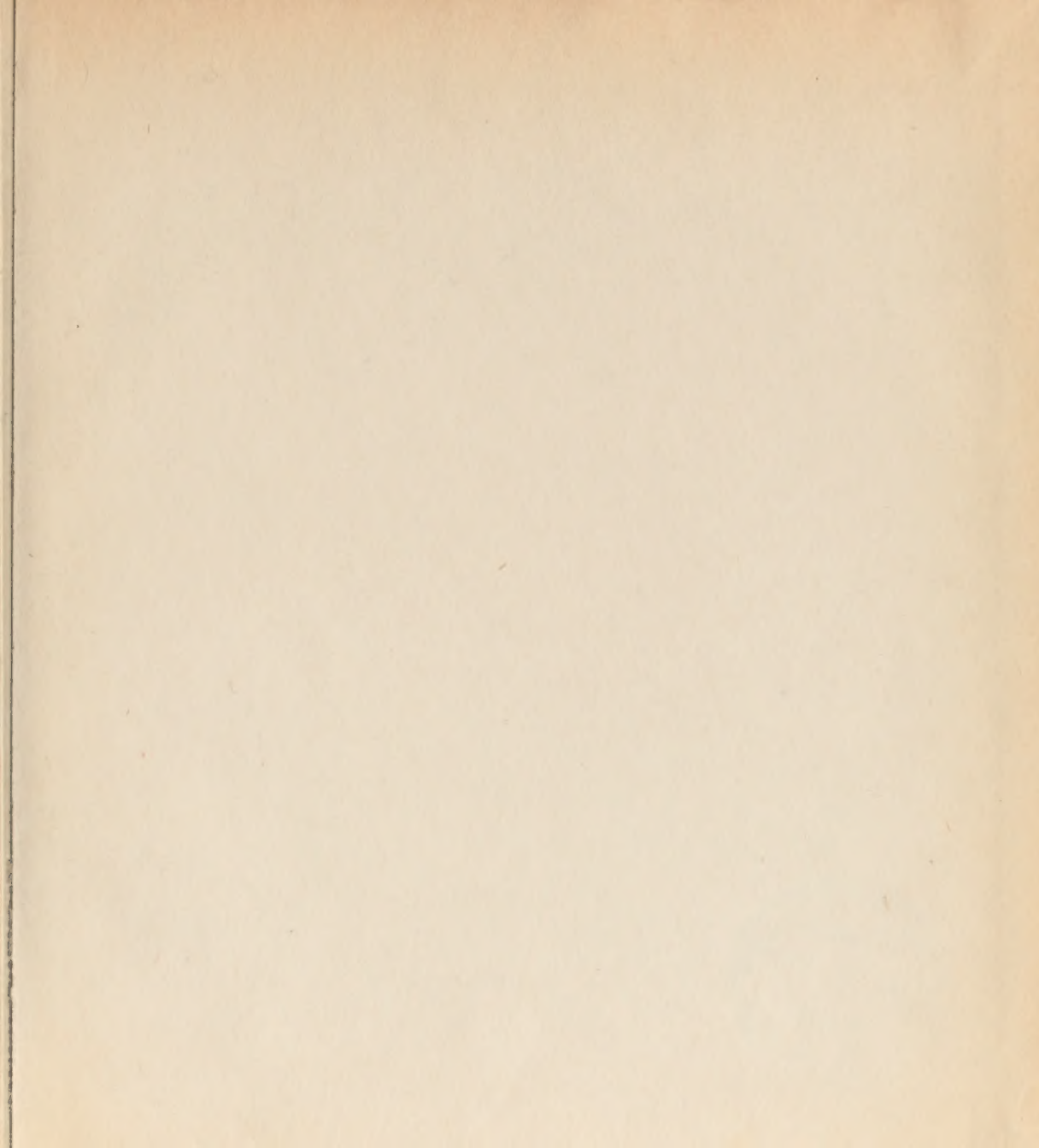
THE CONDOR

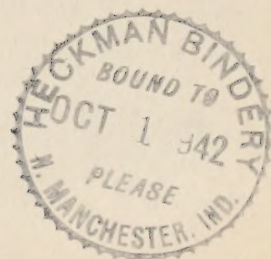
THE Condor is one of the largest of flying birds. Its outspread wings measure over nine feet from tip to tip. This bird lives in South America and feeds chiefly on the bodies of dead animals, but it also kills sheep and goats and for this reason is hated by the farmers of that country. The head and neck of the Condor are naked and dirty pink in colour. On the top of the head there is a large fleshy growth. This is only found in the male bird, the female's head being rounded and smooth. In general colour the plumage is glossy black, with a ruff of soft, pure white feathers round the neck. The long wing feathers are greyish white. The Condor is a remarkably strong flyer and will wheel about for hours at a time with hardly a flap of its wings. Its sight too, is very keen and as soon as an animal dies, or is killed, these birds collect about its body from miles around. In spite of its large size and great strength the Condor is a cowardly bird and never attacks a large animal until it is dying and helpless. During the greater part of the year Condors sleep in trees or among rocks, but when the breeding season arrives they seek out shelves high up on the sides of mountains, and here the two large white eggs are laid. No nest of any kind is built by these birds. The young Condors remain a long time with their parents and are not able to fly until nearly a year old.

THE END
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